



WHITE PAPER

# *Why CIOs & CFOs Choose BlackLine to Accelerate Digital Optimization*



# Disruption & Uncertainty Have Put CIOs & CFOs in the Driver's Seat for Digital & Finance Optimization.

CIOs are focused on delivering the enabling technology for digital modernization. But their organizations are held back by tactical business support, mitigating rising cybersecurity risks, and maintaining an aging technology stack.

CFOs are looking to IT leadership to accelerate their vision for Finance and Accounting. They want modern, finance-owned technology that improves productivity—technology that automates accounting processes, reduces risk, and enhances the employee experience.

In the face of business challenges and market disruptions, their goal is to equip their organizations with the tools to work smarter and more strategically. And they're increasingly looking to digital technology that can quickly solve their business goals without crushing IT capacity.

The good news is that CIOs and CFOs agree on what matters most: that the right technology can empower the workforce, freeing capacity and improving business performance through more effective and efficient processes. Automation and analytics are essential to enabling productivity, agility, and competitive advantage—yet managing it all cannot be the purview of developers and specialists. There isn't enough time or talent.

The demands on organizations aren't slowing but CIOs and CFOs are in the best position to strategically lead change and optimize business processes.

**The question is, are you prepared to confront these demands?**

94%

OF FINANCE AND IT TEAMS BELIEVE  
THAT TIME SPENT ON ACCOUNTING  
TASKS GETS IN THE WAY OF  
STRATEGIC WORK

 IDC

89%

OF COMPANIES BELIEVE THEIR  
CURRENT BUSINESS MODEL WILL  
NOT BE VIABLE IN TWO YEARS

McKinsey  
Digital

57%

OF ORGANIZATIONS BELIEVE THEY  
DO NOT HAVE THE PROCESSES  
TO RESPOND TO BUSINESS  
DISRUPTION

AlixPartners

## Today's CIO: Focused on Digital Yet Held Back by Tactical Support

On-premises systems maintenance dominated the CIO agenda for years. However, the focus has shifted to modernizing operations through cloud-based, digital technology for a superior customer experience and optimized business processes.

75-90%

OF IT CAPACITY IS SPENT ON  
LEGACY BUSINESS PROCESSES

Yet supporting and maintaining back-office systems and daily operational business support processes still take an incredible toll on IT resources. Despite increased headcount, there is often little capacity for innovation, and it is hard to retain top talent if they are mired in tactical IT operations.

## BUDGETS & STAFFING STILL BARRIERS TO TECH ADOPTION



Source: IDG, CIO Tech Poll 2020

### IT Capacity: Further Constrained by Disruption & Uncertainty

Internal and external factors play a critical role in shaping finance's technology strategy, including growing regulations, changing reporting requirements, market disruptions, and new business strategies. For Finance and IT, the need for an array of subledgers and more data for financial and management reporting is higher than ever, at the cost of increasing workloads on both sides—from recognizing revenue to closing the books.

Uncertainty and disruption elevate demands on finance and accounting staff, such as new corporate asks for divisional accounting data that intensifies IT workloads. Ever-changing regulatory requirements expand Finance and Accounting's demands on IT, such as extracting new data from systems across geographies and business units. Preparing for potential disruptions, such as employee turnover and market variability, add strain to IT workloads and force teams to consider adopting new technology to support critical business processes.





## **Supporting Finance & Accounting Needs Remains Challenging**


In many organizations, F&A requests often get deprioritized in favor of front office, supply chain, or other requests. This impacts the efficiency and effectiveness of the finance and accounting function, not to mention their satisfaction with their systems and processes.

Supporting Finance and Accounting is challenging. Operational processes like applying cash, financial reporting, and analytics require frequent IT attention. At the same time, hardened business processes such as reconciliations, receivables management, and journal entries are often buried in a tangle of homegrown logic, scripting, desktop-based spreadsheets, or legacy financial systems, binding IT to a painful and high-maintenance process.

## **Finance Technology Readiness Remains Low**

Adoption of technology to streamline and automate financial processes continues to remain stubbornly low. While companies look to ERPs to automate “core accounting,” ERPs rarely track with changing needs, and ultimately end up being supplemented by growing spreadsheet accounting. New subledgers, digital services, changing business processes, and M&A all ultimately lead to a spreadsheet devolution because ERPs can’t keep pace.

Options like Robotic Process Automation (RPA) seem like a cure-all, but they still require ongoing IT stewardship, and even then, only automate existing technical debt, leaving vast numbers of spreadsheets and paper trails in place—simply creating more issues and risk for the future.



# 5 Ways CIOs & CFOs Can Collaborate to Achieve Digital Success

1.

## BUILD A FOUNDATION FOR RESILIENCE

Uncertainty and disruption are the new normal in a post pandemic era. Evolving business models and economic uncertainty, such as recession fears, coupled with expanding responsibilities and talent gaps add strain to organizational processes and heighten risk. CIOs and CFOs are increasingly looking to adopt strategies that build workforce resilience and protect business operations from both expected and unexpected interference.

Many legacy accounting tools were never designed to adapt to changing business demands. The rigid nature of these systems adds complexity to operational F&A tasks and burdens IT with writing custom code necessary to incorporate changing business requirements and performing ongoing testing and maintenance to assure systems continue to function.

### How BlackLine Delivers a Resiliency Win-Win for CIOs & CFOs

BlackLine empowers accounting and IT teams with a financial operations management platform that centralizes data, processes, and people in one technology. As the foundation to your accounting processes, BlackLine's platform delivers quick wins and unlocks the agility teams need to face evolving business dynamics with capabilities that:

- Unify disparate data from multiple systems
- Centralize and orchestrate accounting work, organization-wide
- Automate mundane and manual process steps
- Provide visibility to key stakeholders including auditors

When everything works together—task management, account reconciliations, transaction matching, and journal entries, all on the same single version of the truth—the financial close is streamlined.

**The result?** CIOs and CFOs more effectively manage their workforces to execute on core responsibilities and are ready for evolving business demands, without overburdening employees.

70%

OF CFOs FEEL THEIR ORGANIZATION IS AT A DISADVANTAGE WITHOUT PURSUING FINANCIAL TRANSFORMATION





## 2.

## EMPOWER ENTERPRISE AGILITY BY CONNECTING DATA

Data as an enterprise asset is driving fundamental changes in the partnership between CIOs and CFOs. Better access to data empowers teams to quickly prepare insights for decision making. Unfortunately, accounting processes often rely on disconnected and disparate data sources that increase the risk of inaccuracy, slow down processes, and create silos. Instead, CIOs and CFOs are increasingly looking at financial technology that can act as a hub, connecting various applications and databases, both within and beyond the enterprise.

A single ERP is often the tip of the iceberg of data sources that Accounting must be able to easily tap into because financial processes inevitably connect to dozens, even hundreds, of systems. They must engage with billing, purchasing, order management, banking, credit card, payroll, benefits, homegrown systems, and numerous other applications that are on-premises or in the cloud.

To gain a competitive advantage, finance and accounting requires a single system—one source of truth—to conduct operations. The efficiencies gained result in increased capacity to be agile, without increased reliance on IT.

### How BlackLine Delivers an Agility Win-Win for CIOs and CFOs

BlackLine provides system-agnostic automation and integrates with over 100 different systems, providing F&A with a single platform to manage the close, regardless of change. Broad application connectivity, SFTP integration flexibility, and bi-directional REST APIs connect data across the tech stack.

With BlackLine, organizations can:

- Quickly connect to data sources with pre-configured, no code integrations
- Easily extract and adjust data pulls as business requirements change
- Unify data from different sources with advanced import utility features
- Execute downstream processes with workflow automation capabilities

A frictionless flow of accurate data across a multi-system landscape enables company-wide visibility for Finance, less time spinning wheels extracting data, and greater agility. And that adds up to a massive reduction in data requests of IT.

**The result?** CIOs and CFOs run organizations that have greater agility to face challenges and additional capacity to redeploy toward more strategic IT and finance activities.

3.

## DECREASE CYBERSECURITY RISKS

Managing cyber risk is a top CIO priority. Manual accounting processes and a changing business landscape increase the risk of exposure. Cyberattacks and data breaches, often caused by outdated security or control failures, are regular headlines. Employees are working differently than they did before, leveraging more technology and accessing their work from outside the office. Proper controls and security around data access are a top consideration.

# \$4M

AVERAGE COST  
OF A DATA BREACH

IBM

The utilization of disparate technologies and an overreliance on spreadsheets and manual processes increases risk, whether accidental or purposeful. According to Cisco, nearly half of remote workers move files—like spreadsheets—between work and personal computers, increasing the risk of sharing confidential information. Technology that relies heavily on spreadsheets and isn't highly flexible may increase these risks. CIOs and CFOs are looking for highly adaptable, easy-to-use technology that mitigates risks through integrating, orchestrating, and automating processes.

### How BlackLine delivers a Cybersecurity Win-Win for CIOs & CFOs

BlackLine centralizes accounting data and processes for the most common accounting activities, like journal entries, reconciliations, and intercompany accounting, reducing data silos, spreadsheets, and manual steps that are often vulnerable. More importantly, BlackLine's ease of use gets strong adoption at all levels in accounting— quickly minimizing process risk.

Industry leading cybersecurity is built directly into BlackLine's platform to meet the extra level of trust that finance and accounting and IT jointly demand. BlackLine validates the effectiveness of security controls by attesting to internationally recognized auditing standards and maintains relevant ISO certifications.

**The result?** CIOs and CFOs sleep better at night, knowing they can trust the effectiveness of BlackLine's controls to limit risk in accounting processes.







## PUT F&A IN CONTROL OF THEIR MODERNIZATION JOURNEY

It's all too common for finance and accounting technology to require heavy IT or technical consulting involvement. In some cases, finance applications require heavy customization due to a lack of out-of-the-box functionality, which creates testing and upgrade overhead and risk. Even as organizations grow, some technology isn't designed to scale or support continuous improvement, which limits the productivity finance teams may be able to realize.

Configuring process automation rules and business logic, such as how accounts are reconciled and transactions are matched, and updating users and permissions, can all end up on IT's lap. Even after an implementation, changes like new reports, dashboards, field updates, data inputs, or modifications to accounting structures often create additional IT work, depleting IT resources and disempowering Finance.

Empowering Finance and Accounting not only improves customer satisfaction (CSAT), but also reduces the reliance on IT for ongoing change requests—so technical teams can focus on new project delivery versus handling frequent business requests.

### BlackLine Delivers a Self-Service Win-Win for CIOs & CFOs

BlackLine puts Finance and Accounting in control within a robust, business-owned platform that facilitates processes and empowers teams to execute on their work efficiently, timely, and accurately. More importantly, BlackLine's intuitive interface streamlines the user experience, enabling rapid adoption, and empowering finance and accounting teams to:

- Quickly address business challenges with flexible solutions
- Simply manage and organize complex data from multiple sources
- Streamline and automate workflows within a collaborative and transparent hub
- Provide complete visibility with key stakeholders, including auditors

Most importantly, BlackLine's platform scales, offering new solutions and capabilities that increase efficiency as companies grow. It's simple to quickly change or add accounts, add new users, change approval processes, or make any other update, all in just a few clicks.

**The result?** CIOs and CFOs see greater alignment of process ownership across their teams, increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of accounting processes.



**“BlackLine has low ongoing maintenance for our users and requires very little IT involvement.”**

Vice President,  
Finance Operations



## AUTOMATE WITH A PURPOSE-BUILT PLATFORM & LEADING PRACTICES

Automating legacy accounting processes—like bank and credit card reconciliations and other repetitive, detail-oriented activities—requires unearthing business logic buried in spreadsheets, SQL, recurring IT requests, and the minds of accounting staff. Screen-scraping and playing back keystrokes using robotic process automation tools creates yet another layer of technical debt on what already exists, not to mention the risk of breakdowns.

ERP functionality is rarely practical, because automation opportunities like reconciliations require data that reaches far beyond it: bank details, fixed assets, credit card transactions, suspense accounts, AR/AP transactions, open items, subscriptions, POS, W-2 matching in benefits and payroll, and numerous other areas.

Most systems rely heavily on customization and quick fixes that are limited in what they can automate, making them unscalable and far from best in class.

### How BlackLine Delivers an Automation Win-Win for CIOs & CFOs

Automating manual processes is one of the top priorities on both the CIO and CFO agenda. The goal is to eliminate manual, cumbersome steps and get predictable, tangible, and reliable results utilizing technology. Purpose-built for Finance, BlackLine enables F&A organizations to automate parts of or whole processes.

BlackLine's continuous, real-time processing automates accounting tasks as they occur. Pre-built templates and rules accelerate automation outcomes. CFOs have instant visibility into the financials, the state of the close, and detail behind the numbers. Automated processes with inherent preventative and detective controls, like segregation of duties, drastically reduce process risk.

BlackLine's accounting and AI/ML-powered transactional automation functionality automates virtually any accounting process while providing a purpose-built experience that minimizes implementation and development.

**The result?** CIOs and CFOs see results faster with greater confidence in the processes and outcomes, knowing manual and risky steps are streamlined and automatic.

80%+

REDUCTION IN FINANCIAL CLOSE  
TIME FROM AUTOMATED PROCESSES  
AT MEDCOMP SCIENCES



98%

OF ACCOUNT RECONCILIATIONS  
AUTOMATICALLY RECONCILED AT  
TRUIST FINANCIAL CORPORATION



\*Formerly Suntrust bank

97%

OF JOURNAL ENTRIES FULLY  
AUTOMATED AT PFG



# Jump-Start Your Modernization Journey with **BlackLine**

BlackLine's financial operations management platform unifies, orchestrates, and automates end-to-end accounting processes, enabling enhanced accuracy, visibility, control, and insights, all of which contribute to scalability and resource flexibility. Leading companies are deploying BlackLine's modern accounting technology to reduce manual effort and enable more strategic finance and IT functions. CFOs and CIOs are realizing quick wins and creating a resilient foundation for financial operational excellence.

With BlackLine, Finance and Accounting can operate using business-owned solutions that free capacity for IT teams to focus on top-of-mind priorities—like improving cybersecurity, implementing new systems, and deploying intelligent automation throughout the business. Similarly, finance and accounting teams can execute processes quickly and accurately, freeing capacity for strategic priorities, including providing greater insights, managing organizational change, and supporting M&A.

**Learn more about how BlackLine empowers  
[CFO and CIO collaboration](#).**